

Needs Assessment:

Farmworkers of Manatee County, Florida



Vashon Goode
Enterprise Technology Partners

Christine Roberts
Jennifer Stoloff
US-HUD

January 2005

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Manatee County, Florida – Agricultural and Farmworker Overview.....	1
Background.....	2
Project Approach	4
Survey Findings	6
Adults and Education and Language	7
Households with Children.....	9
The Need for Day Care	10
Children and School.....	11
Types of Housing.....	12
Homeownership	14
Housing Assessment	15
Housing Quality	15
Housing Costs	16
Overcrowding	16
Neighborhood	16
Income and Employment.....	17
Employment by Agricultural Sector	18
Unaccompanied Workers’ Work	19
Spouses’ Work.....	19
Employment Benefits.....	20
Employment Obstacles	20
Banking.....	20
Health Care	20
Conclusion	21

Acknowledgements

The success of the Manatee County Farmworker Survey was due to the collaborative effort involving representatives from federal, local and private sector organizations. The hard work and dedication these individuals provided was instrumental in the successful execution and completion of the study. In particular, a special thank you is extended to the following people:

U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Frank Davis – Director, Office of Departmental Operations and Coordination
- Gloria Shanahan – Public Relations

Enterprise Technology Partners, LLC

- Mark Glover – Project Principle
- Alicia Ramirez – Project Coordinator
- Marvin Santos – Data Input Analyst
- Gil Dutton – Database Administrator

Surveyors:

- Ana Guzman Aviles
- Raquel Beltran
- Erika Cervantes
- Jo Anna Guerrero
- Mary Guerrero
- Johana Gutierrez
- Francisco Lopez
- Viviana Lopez
- Enedelia Manley
- Carmen Moliere
- Juana Maria Molina
- Angelica Ramirez
- Nery Salguero
- Olga Wilson
- Refugio Zavala, Jr.

Latino Community Network (LCN) of Manatee County – Needs Assessment Subcommittee

- Maria Matos – Latino Community Network Chairperson and Manatee County Schools: Migrant Program
- Joanie Alexander – Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center
- Edna Apostol – Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center
- Sharon Carlson – Manatee County Rural Health Services/Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County
- Luz Corcuera – Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County
- Debbie DeLeon – Manatee County Human Services
- Esperanza Gamboa – Manatee Technical Institute
- Lynda Douglas – Manatee County Public Schools: Migrant Program
- Joan Mahon – Community Volunteer
- Chris Roberts – US-HUD

Additional Acknowledgements to . . .

- Commissioner Patricia Glass for her continuous support and encouragement
- Gerardo Ramirez for collating and proofing the survey's translation
- Robert Renner for the many maps that needed creating

Introduction

This report contains the findings of a survey of farmworkers and farmworker families living in Manatee County, Florida. The objective of the survey was to identify gaps between available community services and the needs of farmworkers. The information collected from the survey may help to better understand the needs of farmworkers and to create programs to address those needs. The survey was sponsored by the Office of Departmental Operations and Coordination (ODOC) of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Latino Community Network of Manatee County.

Although a primary focus of the survey was housing, the project also sought information on social, educational, health and environmental issues. HUD understands, as do farmworker advocates, that although safe, decent and affordable housing provide the cornerstone for a vibrant community, it is only the first step.

Manatee County, Florida – Agricultural and Farmworker Overview

While the State of Florida ranks second nationwide in cash crop receipts, Manatee County ranks 8th among the state's 67 counties in agricultural sales. Agriculture is a major stable contributor to the economy of the county and state providing food for Florida residents, the nation and the world. The annual estimated impact of the agricultural industry in Manatee County is \$250 million¹, with a trickle down impact of \$450 million. The industry has grown significantly over the years, with farm income increasing 141.9% in the period from 1987 – 1997². Row crop production of vegetables, sweet corn and melons account for almost 50% of cash receipts, with nurseries, fruits, nuts, berries and dairy accounting for another 45%³. The engine driving this agricultural economy is the 13,000 seasonal and migrant farmworkers that work and live in Manatee County.

More than 18,000 farmworkers and family members consider Manatee County home, based on a profile completed in 2000⁴. "Seasonal workers" and their family members, who reside in the county year-round, account for approximately 41% of the total. "Migrant workers", who leave the area to follow the crops north once the harvest season ends, account for approximately 43% of the population; while migrant family members, most of whom remain in the area year round, account for the remaining 16%. Florida is the primary "sending state" of the eastern migrant stream, and most migrant farmworkers consider Manatee County their home. The agricultural season in Manatee varies by crop but in general extends over a 9-month period from late September to mid-June. For this reason the families of migrants with children tend to remain in the area throughout the school year, with many remaining year-round, establishing permanent residency in Manatee County.

The influx of farmworkers and their families places a strain on the available affordable and decent housing in Manatee County. In Florida, there are primarily three sources of housing for farmworkers: the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) farm labor housing developments, Florida Department of Health licensed migrant facilities, and private sector units.

The USDA's farm labor housing programs (the 514 and 516 programs) provide low interest (typically 1%) loan/grant combination monies to nonprofits for the construction of rent subsidized farm labor units, and low interest loan funds (1%) to farmers for construction of farm labor units. Although Manatee County ranks fifth in the state in farmworker population, there are *no* USDA funded units in the county. (There is currently one 55-unit community in development).

¹ Manatee County Demographics; www.webcoast.com/manatee.htm

² Statistics on Agriculture in Florida, 1987-1997; Department of Food and Resource Economics, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville

³ 1997 Census of Agriculture, County Profile, United State Department of Agriculture, Florida Agriculture Statistics Service

⁴ Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study Florida Final, September 2000, prepared for the Migrant Health Program by Alice C. Larson, Ph.D. Larson Assistance Services

The state's Department of Health migrant housing licensing program was drafted to comply with Department of Labor rules regarding agricultural employment. It is primarily concerned with preventing injury and the spread of communicable disease; therefore the building code standards are rather minimal. The program requires an annual permit, and the housing can be owned by growers, labor contractors or anyone from the private sector. It is primarily a self-reporting program, though any property owner renting to migrant farmworkers is required to comply with the program and seek licensing. In Manatee County there have been approximately 1900 beds annually licensed, the vast majority of which are grower owned by a handful of local growers. This housing represents the most stable stock of farmworker housing in the county, but is only available to employees of the owner growers and contractors.

This leaves thousands of families scrambling to find housing in the private sector, families with annual earnings as low as \$5,000 – which is less than a fifth of the wages needed to pay the rent on a modest, two-bedroom unit, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)⁵.

Background

The scarcity of housing for farmworkers and their families warrants investigation by community, state and federal organizations. A major challenge in developing housing options had been the historical lack of information, beyond census and agricultural estimates, about farmworkers. While it is well known that farmworkers tend to be poor, they live quietly “off the radar” in most communities, seldom coming forward with requests for assistance. Research by the Housing Assistance Council (HAC) illustrates that farmworkers apply for only 30% of the services for which they are eligible, making extrapolating data from service providers an inadequate method of measurement. According to Manatee County Commissioner Patricia Glass, “...there is a terrible lack of understanding of the problems. People need to understand . . . that this is not a static population but a large population that is increasing.” To address this issue HUD, with support from the Latino Community Network of Manatee County, commissioned a needs assessment of Manatee's farmworker communities

During the summer of 2002 a group of farmworkers was discovered living in deplorable housing conditions in a rural area of Manatee County on land owned by a local grower. The community was outraged and newspapers ran a series of articles about the housing situation. Over time, newspaper coverage continued and the scope of the articles expanded to include the overall lack of decent, affordable housing and other social concerns of the county's farmworkers. At the request of the Board of County Commissioners, one Commissioner, Patricia Glass, took a leadership role on the issue, convening a series of community forums to discuss farmworker housing.

At the same time, the Latino Community Network of Manatee County began to investigate the social service needs of farmworkers. The Network members included various private and public sector social service and education agencies. The group discovered that farmworkers appeared to be under-represented in the service sectors and that many member organizations were unaware of the grant funded programs of Manatee County government. In the fall of 2002 the Network co-hosted (with the County) a forum where County staff delivered presentations on its service and grants programs to an audience that represented over 40 agencies.

County staff stated during the presentation that they hoped to increase their outreach into the farmworker communities as a result of the forum and asked the Network for help. Network members pledged their assistance in two ways, first, by making farmworker client referrals to appropriate county programs and, second, by educating county staff on the unmet needs within the farmworker community. The unmet needs issue was brought to the next regular Network meeting where the group realized there was little data available to demonstrate the needs that advocates and service providers knew existed. In response, a Needs Assessment Subcommittee was formed to identify unmet needs. (The members of this Subcommittee and their affiliations can be found in the Acknowledgements on page iii.)

⁵ United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Market Study – Manatee County - Farmworker Housing, 2003

Over the following twelve months the Network and Subcommittee completed an enormous amount of work on a volunteer basis. The first task was to develop a survey instrument. Two members of the Network had participated in a small-scale farmworker assessment in neighboring Sarasota County and brought that survey instrument to the table. For five months the Network spent most of its monthly meetings expanding the scope of the survey and fine-tuning questions. Housing questions and questions about many of the issues being addressed by members of the Network, such as legal concerns, predatory lending, credit, and transportation were added. The completed survey contained over 120 questions.

The Latino Community Network Needs Assessment Subcommittee continued to refine the survey instrument and created three other documents:

- A profile of Manatee County's farmworkers
- A list of qualifications for prospective Surveyors
- A training manual for the Surveyors

The profile of the farmworker communities created the scope and geographic targets for the eventual project. It included population estimates for single workers, married workers, and family members, as well as estimates of how many migrated and how many maintained permanent residence in Manatee County. The profile also included a listing of all the motels, residences and areas of the county where farmworkers were known to live. This information was gathered from two primary resources: outreach workers from local service providers and the Florida Department of Health's list of licensed farmworker housing units.

The Needs Assessment Subcommittee knew they were trying to survey a population that lives quietly, does not seek help, and is leery of attention – and, therefore, would be hesitant to give out the sort of personal information the survey was designed to collect. The recruitment and training of the surveyors were critical issues. The surveyors had to be recruited from within the farmworker community, had to be bilingual (both verbal and written), and had to be able to work nights and weekends to accommodate the farmworkers' schedules. For reasons of safety and time, it was decided the surveyors would work in pairs. One surveyor would ask the questions and one would record the responses.

All prospective surveyors were recruited by Network members from the local community. Training posed special challenges because the prospective surveyors had no prior experience with survey methods. The Training Manual developed was simple, yet very specific, and designed to accommodate their inexperience. Training took several sessions. The first session was an overview of the survey project, an introduction to survey methods, an explanation of how this particular survey was to be conducted, and a brief review of the survey instrument. The surveyors were sent home with a copy of the survey for further review and the second training consisted of a question and answer session about the survey and role-playing using the instrument. Role-playing was particularly important, as it taught the surveyors how not to lead the respondents' answers and how to conduct themselves in the field. The third phase of training involved practicing the survey instrument with Focus Groups. The final training phase was supervised fieldwork.

In addition, the Subcommittee began looking for funding for the project, primarily to allow the surveyors to be paid a stipend for each survey completed. The Southwest Border, Migrant/Farmworker Initiative in HUD provided a small grant to procure the services of a contractor to oversee the project, hire staff, pay stipends to surveyors, input data, analyze data, and produce a final report. A scope of work for the vendor was developed by the Subcommittee and incorporated into HUD's contract with Enterprise Technology Partners (ETP). The contract was written for a one-year period from September 30, 2003 – September 30, 2004.

Project Approach

1. *Revising the Survey Instrument.* The survey instrument was expansive. The final version included over 120 questions covering seven major topics: Demographics and General Information; Housing Assessment; Neighborhood Assessment; General Family Questions; Work and Money; Drugs and Alcohol; and Health, Environmental and Social Issues. It took an average of 20-25 minutes to interview respondents. The actual time to complete a survey was considerably longer when travel time and time spent walking and knocking on doors were factored in.
2. *Target Population and Sampling.* The target population for the survey was the 13,000 farmworkers of Manatee County, both migrant and seasonal, and their 5,000 family members. The survey did not distinguish between “migrant” and “seasonal” as most farmworkers consider Manatee home. The fieldwork had to be conducted during the agricultural season. Due to the difficulty of locating the respondents, a convenience sample was used, based primarily on geography. This sampling method represented one of the few feasible options for gathering accurate information on the farmworkers because of their mobility and language barriers. In the end, the farmworker households were identified by overlaying the locations identified by the outreach workers and census data against a map of population density for Latinos in the County as compiled in the most recent Census by geographic block. The target number of households was 1,000, with a response rate of up to 60 percent. All the target locations were Census Blocks that were mapped by HUD and provided to the Surveyors. The surveyor teams were instructed to knock on every door in each targeted Census Block.
3. *Identification and Recruitment of the Project Coordinator, Data Input Analyst and Surveyors.*
 - *Project Coordinator:* The Project Coordinator was responsible for the day-to-day management of the project, accompanying the surveyors in the field when appropriate, and reviewing completed surveys for accuracy. The core required skills for the Project Coordinator were fluency in written and spoken Spanish, solid management skills, familiarity with Manatee County and the target locations, and a cultural understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of the farmworker population.
 - *Data Input Analyst:* The Data Input Analyst entered the completed survey results (in English) into a Microsoft Access database. The requirements for the Data Input Analyst included the ability to speak and read both Spanish and English, technical proficiency with Microsoft Access, and a cultural understanding of the needs of the farmworker population.
 - *Surveyors:* Once trained, the surveyors would execute the farmworker survey by traveling door-to-door to identified target Census blocks collecting information from the farmworker families they encountered.
4. *Translation of the survey instrument into culturally appropriate Spanish.* The Needs Assessment Subcommittee knew that hiring a professional translator would lead to an inaccurate translation, therefore they did the translation themselves. The Subcommittee divided the survey instrument up amongst themselves, translated their pieces, and turned them over to a community volunteer who put the pieces together and made sure the translation was consistent, accurate, and maintained the integrity of the original document. The community volunteer who did the final review and collation was a professional translator who works closely with the farmworker community.
5. *Conducting the Field Work.* The surveys were each assigned a unique number. The surveyors were provided ID's, assigned specific areas to survey and instructed not to visit the same household more than three times to obtain a completed survey. When conducting the assessment, the team found that several of the target areas (Census blocks) did not contain farmworkers, which was not unexpected. This issue was partially mitigated by the identification of approximately 105 “hidden” farmworker households. In the end, a total of 525 surveys were completed before the agricultural season ended.

The surveyors were brought in for a weekly debriefing and the surveys were given two levels of review. It became apparent that there were questions the surveyors did not understand or were recording incorrectly. Additional training was conducted on several occasions. The constant review of the completed surveys was critical. It provided assurance that targeted households were being visited, that all census blocks identified were being visited, and especially that the surveys turned in were complete and that the surveyors understood the questions.

Surveyor turnover was high and initially an insufficient number (eight) of surveyors were hired. The Project Coordinator and the Subcommittee were constantly recruiting additional surveyors, a task complicated by the stipends paid, long travel distances, the personal nature of the questions, and the fact that the surveying had to be done in the evenings and on the weekends.

6. *Data Input.* One person was assigned the responsibility for inputting all data to ensure continuity, and each 10th survey was input twice (once by the Data Input person and once in a separate database by ETP staff) to ensure accuracy. In addition, all data was input in English so various stakeholders could review and study the results.
7. *Media Strategy and Public Relations.* During the time of the project local media continued to cover farmworker issues and several requests for interviews were made to the Needs Assessment Subcommittee. One spokesperson was designated and media talking points were developed.

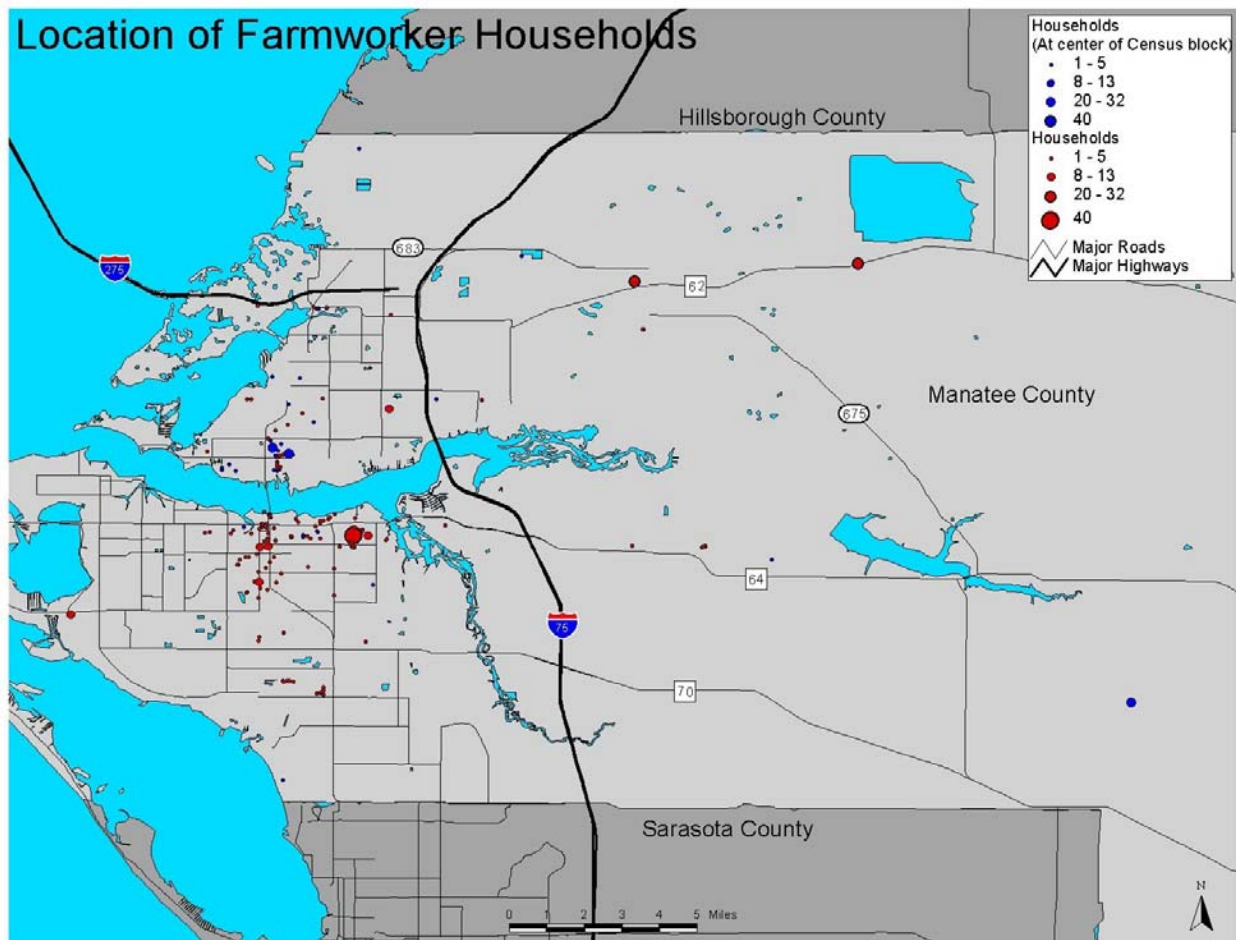
HUD Public Affairs (PA) assisted several times during the project. At the beginning, PA created a Spanish public service announcement for airing on the local Spanish radio stations letting the community know that surveyors, wearing official ID's, would be coming into neighborhoods collecting information from farmworker households to be used for the community's benefit. Toward the end of the project PA drafted flyers for neighborhood distribution to reinforce the message.

Survey Findings

The fieldwork yielded 525 completed surveys. The population base was estimated to be 18,000, thus the surveyors were able to capture information from 1 of every 34 farmworkers. Responses indicated an average household size of 4.9. Extrapolating further, information was gathered from *approximately* 1 out of every 7 farmworker households – a rate of return considered excellent by the group. This is an approximation because there were several occasions when survey data was collected from more than one unrelated farmworker residing in the same housing unit). The 2:1 male-female ratio of the responses was also consistent with what is known about this population.

This part of the report will summarize the survey findings. Questions were asked about many aspects of farmworker's lives, not only their housing conditions. The areas discussed in this report are adult education; children's issues; housing conditions, quality and costs; neighborhood concerns; income and employment issues; banking; and health care issues. While the results are not necessarily representative of the farmworker population of Manatee county, this is the best and only information that has been gathered on this group.

The map below shows where the survey respondents lived.

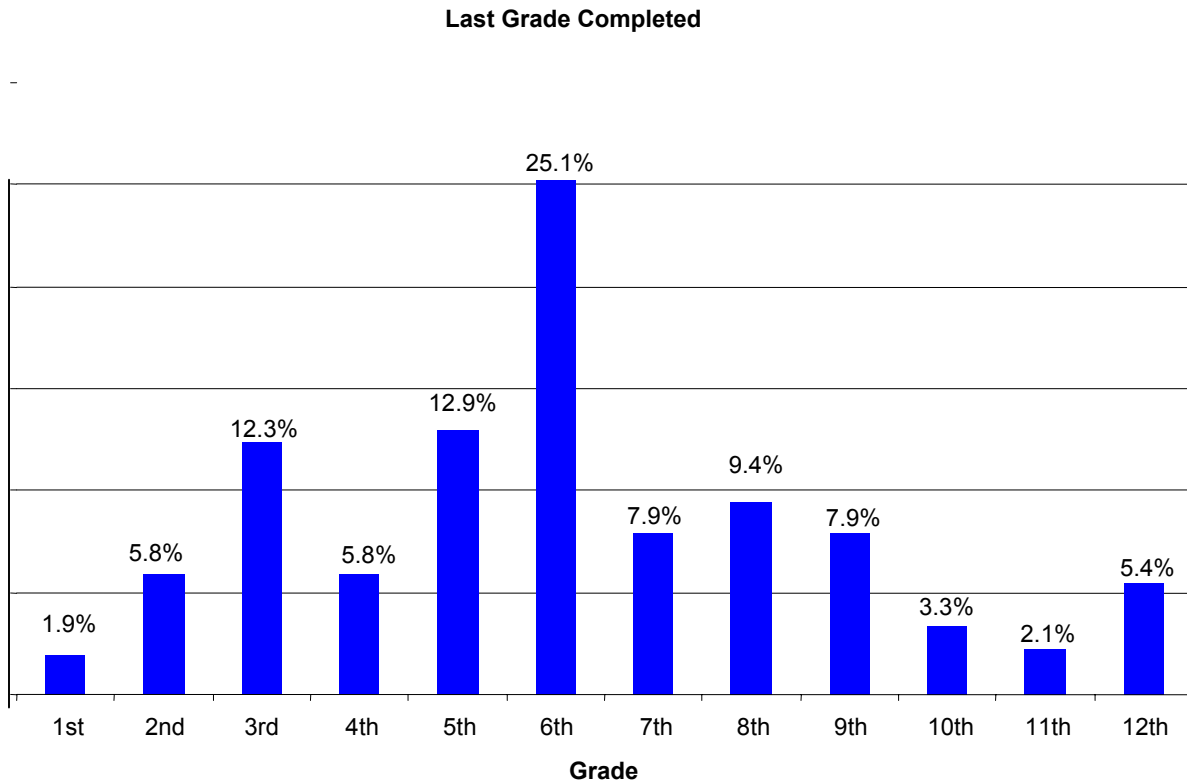


Adults and Education and Language

Overwhelmingly the farmworkers surveyed prefer to speak Spanish (97%). Most households (75.8%) speak Spanish exclusively, but 18% are bilingual. In the average household about one person is considered proficient in English, including children. When asked how they managed with poor English skills, 53.8% of the farmworkers stated they managed on their own, while 39.5% reported receiving assistance from an adult family member or friend. Only 6.7% relied on help from a child living in the home.

	Count	Percent/ Mean
Language preference		
Spanish	17	3.4
English	486	97.0
N	503	
Language spoken at home		
Spanish only	398	75.8
English only	10	2.0
Both	91	18.0
Mixteco	6	1.2
N	505	
English speakers in household		
0	202	50.12
1 or more	201	49.88
N	403	1.16
Who helps translate		
Child	32	6.7
Adult	190	39.5
No one	259	53.8
N	481	
English speaking skills		
Very poor/poor (1-2)	317	64.0
Fair (3)	93	18.8
Good/Excellent (4-5)	85	17.2
N	495	2.3
English reading skills		
Very poor/poor (1-2)	355	70.7
Fair (3)	64	12.7
Good/Excellent (4-5)	83	16.5
N	502	2.2

Sample size (N) for this graph is 479.



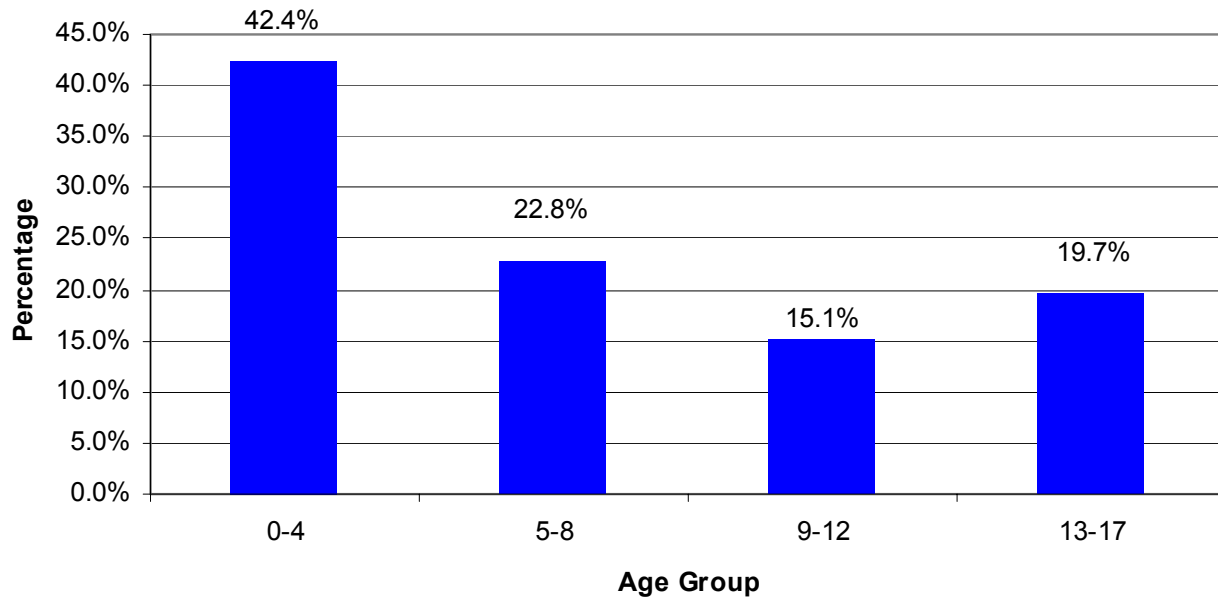
The project expected to find an education attainment level no higher than the fourth grade for the majority of farmworkers. A pleasant surprise was finding 61.1% had reached at least a sixth grade level of education. Only 5.4% completed high school, as compared to a countywide average of 81.4%.

Seventy percent of farmworkers reported their English reading skills as either very poor or poor. About 56% of respondents would like to attend adult education classes, while 10% of households had at least one member attending ESL classes. When asked why those wishing to attend classes were not doing so, the most frequently given reasons were time (39%), transportation (21%), and lack of money (19%). Service providers can address all of these issues, one of which is simply a lack of outreach and information (the classes are not fee based, but are available free of charge). Classes need to be scheduled in the off-season and at convenient times during the agricultural season. Classes should be held near where farmworkers live. The issue of transportation came up repeatedly during the survey, as only a minority of farmworkers owns a vehicle. Ninety five percent of farmworker households reported no one in the home attending college or technical school.

Households with Children

In Manatee County the average household size is 2.6 people. In farmworker households where children reside, the average household size is 6.8. The average family size is 4.3 related individuals, with an average of 2.5 children per home (where children were present). As will be reported later, these numbers suggest over-crowded housing is an issue for farmworkers. It also appears that many children reside in homes with their parents and other unrelated adults. Most of the children present are very young. There were 241 households with children in residence. There were a total of 607 children mentioned.

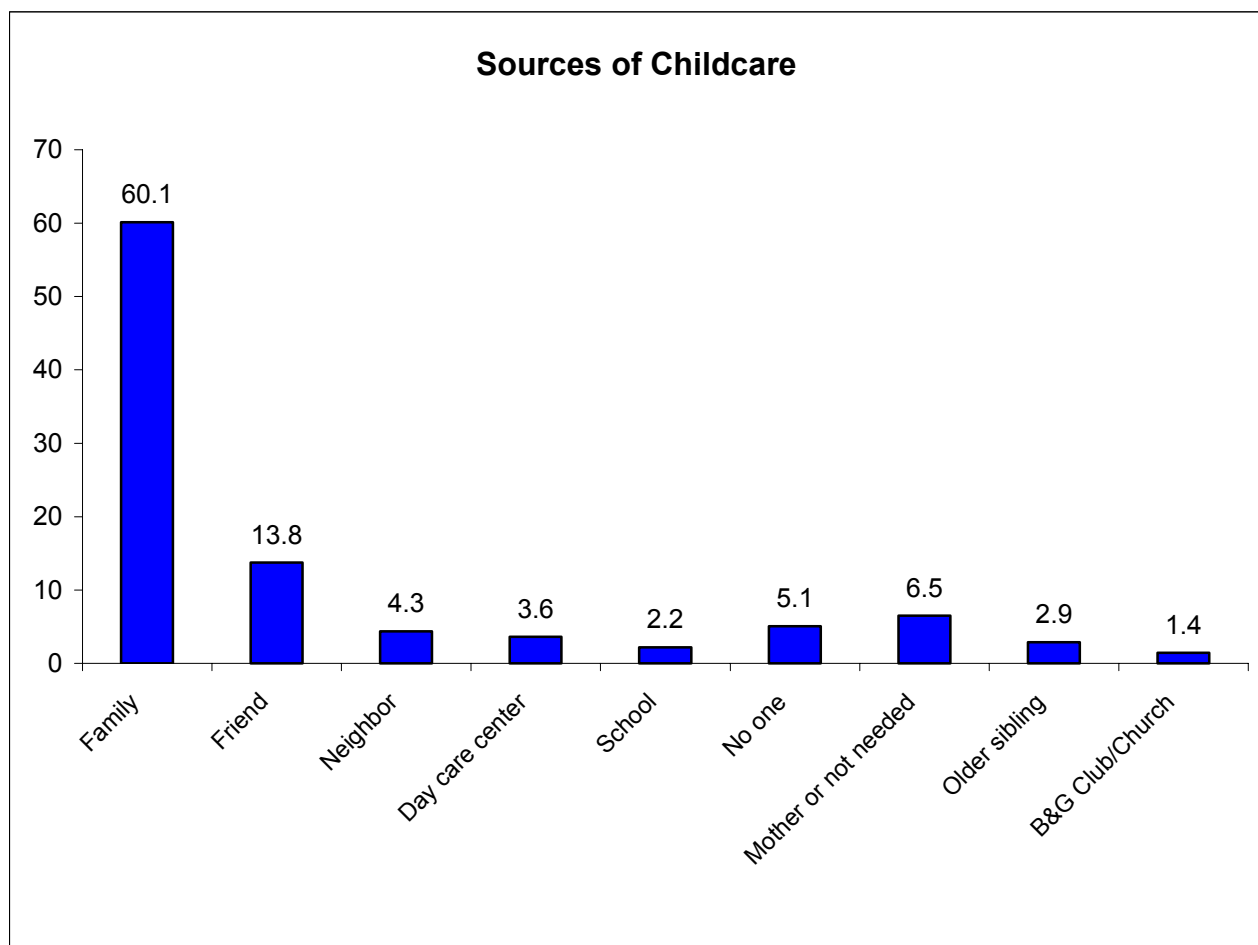
Children By Age Group



The Need for Day Care

Many of the children (42.4%) in the households surveyed were four years of age or younger, but only 3.6% were enrolled in day care. The primary reasons cited for not having children enrolled in day care were cost (42%) and the availability of night and weekend care (20%). Most children stayed at home with adult supervision, or with neighbors, but there was some self-reporting of children being left home unattended (though these may be older children). There are few child-care facilities in Manatee County that will accept children on a sliding scale fee basis. There are successful programs outside of Manatee County that provide pre-school care to farmworker families that could serve as models. For example, the nonprofit Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) maintains a sizable network of facilities in farmworker communities across Florida.

The need for night and weekend care was highest amongst packing house workers. Perhaps these employers can be encouraged to partner in the development of accessible childcare options.

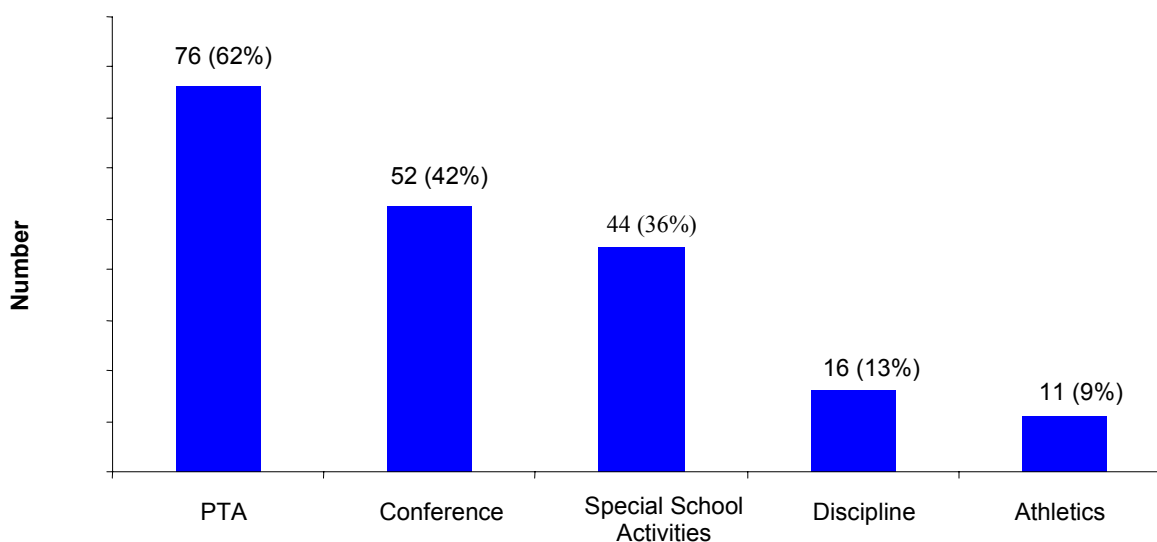


*The sample size for this graph is 138; the categories are mutually exclusive.

Children and School

Farmworker families with school-age children demonstrated an impressive involvement in their children's education and were extremely happy with the education being provided. More than half of the families participated in a school function over the previous year, with the primary reason (62%) being to attend PTA meetings and events. The majority (81%, N=118) rated their children's school as good or excellent. Many students (25%, N=34) took advantage of after school activities. Over a quarter of the respondents, 29% (N=122) reported having after school tutoring available to the children. The number of respondents who gave a non-missing response to this series of questions about reasons for visiting their child's school is 123, which was used to calculate the percentages in the following graph.

Reasons for Visiting Their Child's School



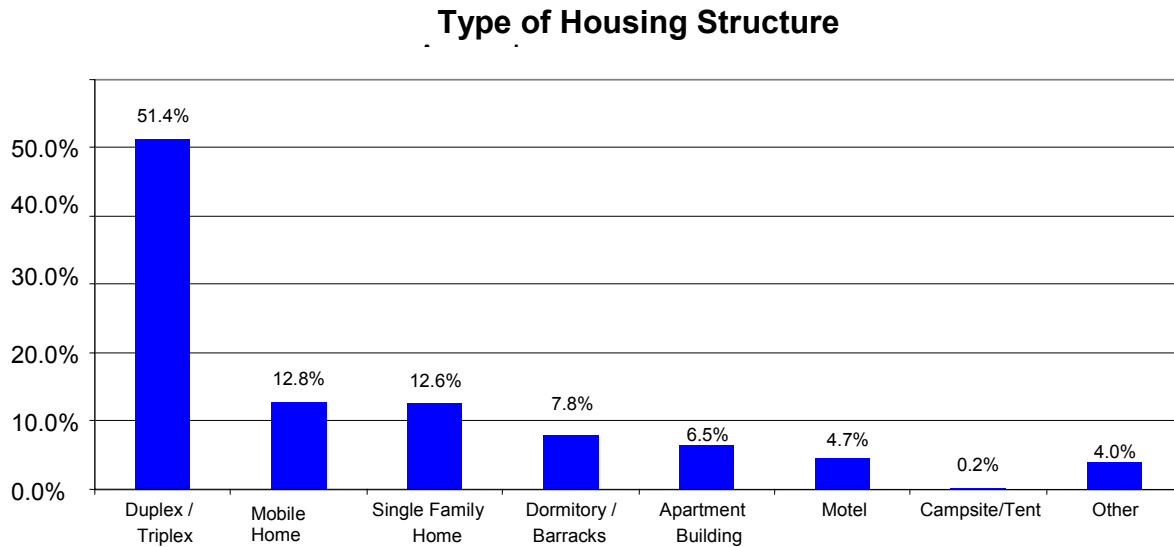
After school, about half of the children (51.1%, n=69) were left in the care of friends or relatives, while 38.5% (n=52) played with friends. Nineteen percent (n=26) were involved in after school activities, including organized sports. Eight percent (n=11) stayed home alone, and 6% (n=8) were involved in church programs.

Although summer programs were available to 79% of school age children surveyed, only 59% had their children enrolled. The primary reasons given for not participating were lack of money, lack of information, family migration and lack of transportation.

Overwhelmingly, the one neighborhood improvement most requested (66%) for children was parks. (This same request will come up again when adults were asked what improvements they would like to see in their neighborhoods for themselves.) The four other most requested resources/improvements for children were (in order): recreational sports, daycare, after school programs, and tutoring.

Types of Housing

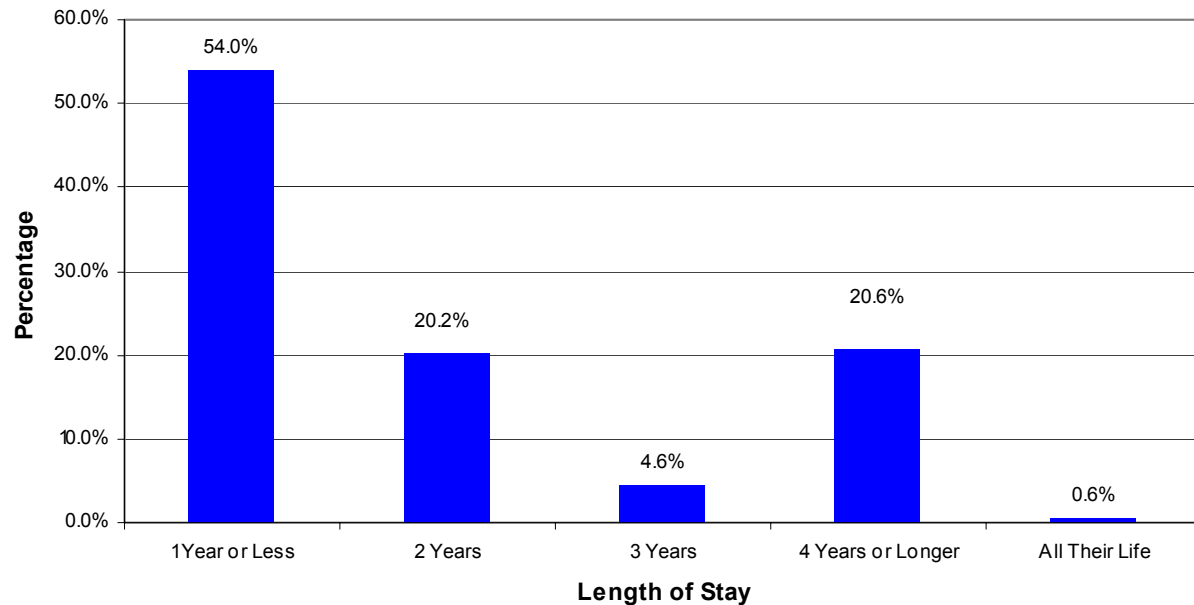
As previously reported all surveys were conducted at or in residence, and housing data was collected. The most common type of housing for farmworkers was duplexes (52%), followed by mobile homes, single-family residences, dormitories, apartments and motel rooms. There were 509 responses to this question.



Length of Stay in Current Residence

There was one surprise uncovered when looking at how long farmworkers had been living in their current residence. While it was expected that many farmworkers were having to move frequently because of income and migration, it was not expected that many would have resided in the same unit for an extended period of time. Not surprisingly, more than half (54%) had had to relocate at least once in the previous year. However, 21% had lived in the same residence for at least four years, which makes a strong statement about stability in both employment and housing.

How Long They Lived in Unit



Homeownership

To investigate homeownership the type of housing was divided into three categories, “renters,” “owners,” and “other.” The other category probably includes some renters, but all of the respondents in this category were either living with their family, in camp, dormitory or barracks. The renter category also includes families living at a motel, mobile home or renting a room.

Very few households owned their own homes (18 or 3.5%), but it is surprising that there were any home owners in the sample at all. As can be seen in the table below, owners have slightly higher housing costs and have lived in their homes longer than the rest of the sample. They also rated their housing quality as higher. Not surprisingly, owners only lived in three types of structures, those most commonly associated with homeownership from the choices: mobile homes, single family homes, and duplexes/triplexes. There are no real differences in household size among the three groups, though the owners have slightly more children, when children are present.

	Owners	Renters	Others (Camps, etc.)	All
N (sample size)	18	221	270	509
Percent of total sample	3.5	43.4	53.0	100
Monthly housing cost				
Average	491.11	432.42	68.98	257.00
Median	500.00	500.00	56.00	112.00
Tenure (length of time at unit, in years)				
Average	2.78	1.75	1.94	1.89
Median	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Household size				
Average	5.78	5.86	5.64	5.74
Median	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00
Quality of housing (respondent report, highest=5, lowest=1)				
Average	3.94	3.08	3.39	3.28
Median	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Number of children 17 years old or younger				
N (sample size)	13.00	102.00	116.00	231.00
Average	2.69	2.38	2.49	2.45
Median	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Type of housing structure (%)				
N (sample size)	18	209	264	491
Mobile home	27.8	8.6	16.7	13.6
Single family home	66.7	10.5	11.7	13.2
Duplex/Triplex	5.6	68.4	45.1	53.6
Apartment building	0.0	9.1	4.5	6.3
Dormitory/barracks	0.0	1.0	14.4	8.1
Campsite	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2
Motel	0.0	2.4	7.2	4.9
Agricultural sector (%) (categories are not mutually exclusive)				
Crops (N=266)	2.6	32.3	65.0	N/A
Packing house (N=127)	2.4	40.9	56.7	
Truck/tractor driver (N=33)	0.0	30.3	69.7	
Nursery (N=127)	5.6	71.0	23.4	
Citrus (N=43)	0.0	58.1	41.9	

Housing Assessment

Twenty questions of the survey were devoted to housing quality. Twelve questions asked about exterior housing conditions, and the remaining eight queried interior conditions. It was hypothesized that the housing quality of grower/contractor provided housing would be better than housing available on the private market.

Overall, approximately two thirds of all units presented interior and exterior housing deficiencies. The most common interior problems were peeling paint/broken plaster and unsanitary conditions, evidence of water leaks, and cracks or holes in walls or ceilings. The most common exterior concerns were broken windows or missing screens, trash and garbage laying in the yards, and peeling paint.

As expected, there was a noticeable difference in housing quality almost across the board when comparing grower owned housing to private housing – with grower owned being much better. When looking at sagging structural features, broken windows or missing screens, peeling paint inside and out, trash or garbage outside, exposed wiring or water leaks, for every one time it was found in employer provided housing it was found twice in private housing.

Housing Condition*	# Units	Employer %	Private %
Exterior			
Sagging structural features (roof, porch, frame, foundation)	83	69.9	30.1
Holes in roof, shingles missing, exposed tar paper	82	72.0	28.0
Peeling paint	185	61.1	38.9
Decayed or missing siding	60	60.0	40.0
Garbage or trash in yard	193	67.9	32.1
Windows missing panes or screen	219	62.6	37.4
Interior			
Open cracks or holes in walls or ceiling (larger than a dime)	100	62	38
Areas of peeling paint or plaster larger than a fist	165	64.8	35.2
Frayed or exposed wiring, other electrical problems	37	56.8	43.2
Evidence of water leakage from roof, doors, windows, or plumbing	124	69.4	30.6
Unsanitary conditions in evidence (rodents, filth, garbage piles)	165	52.1	47.9

*Drums, pesticide containers, gasoline tanks or similar items were found on 22 properties.

Housing Quality

Not surprisingly, only 39% (n=200) of farmworkers rated their housing quality as good. The majority rated it as fair, poor or very poor. Almost all respondents (89%, n=404) stated a willingness to move to rental units developed for farmworkers, should some become available in the county, and 90% (n=400) stated a willingness to pay an extra \$25 per month for air conditioning if given the chance.

Housing Costs

When looking at rent, grower owned units were consistently more affordable than units found in the private market. In fact, many grower owned units charged no rent, and in some cases, charged no utility costs either. Rents ranged from \$0 (83 units) to \$1,000 (1 unit) per month, with 68% of units with rents between \$10-\$498 per month. The average rent was \$254 per month. The explanation for the much lower rents observed for the units that include utilities is that these are mostly grower-provided housing and are rented at low or no cost to the household.

	Rent Includes utilities N=200	Rent No utilities N=242
Average rent	\$101	\$409
Median rent	\$56	\$497
Standard deviation	\$148	\$219

	Grower/contractor provided housing N=215	Other housing N=254	Total N=469
Average cost	\$56	\$424	\$254
Median cost	\$56	\$497	\$112
Standard deviation	\$74	\$209	\$244

Overcrowding

Overcrowding appears to be a very common problem. Overcrowding was calculated by taking the total number of people living in the unit and dividing this number by the gross number of habitable rooms (dining rooms, living rooms and bedrooms). When applying this definition the vast majority of units (82%) were found to be overcrowded. In addition, 60% of all bathrooms and kitchens were reported as shared with non-family members. The average number of bedrooms per unit was 2.6.

Neighborhood

How safe a farmworker felt in his/her neighborhood reflected their view of housing quality. One-third viewed crime as a problem (n=182), with only 41% (n=210) feeling "very safe". "Somewhat safe" is defined as not feeling free to walk around, and 43% (n=220) reported feeling only "somewhat safe".

When asked what improvements adults would most like to see in their neighborhoods, the primary responses were parks and recreation. The three others most frequently requested were better housing, laundry facilities and pay phones. Less than one third of housing had on-site laundries or telephones.

The desire for laundry facilities has a direct bearing on farmworker health, as most farmworkers come into daily contact with pesticides. Pesticide protocol calls for keeping exposed clothing separate, washing it daily in hot water, and either drying in a dryer or out in the sun. Farmworkers are taught not to wear clothing exposed to pesticides inside their homes, especially if there are children present. The absence of available laundry facilities puts all household members at risk of exposure to pesticides. With only a small minority of farmworkers owning transportation, laundry facilities need to be located within close walking distance of housing.

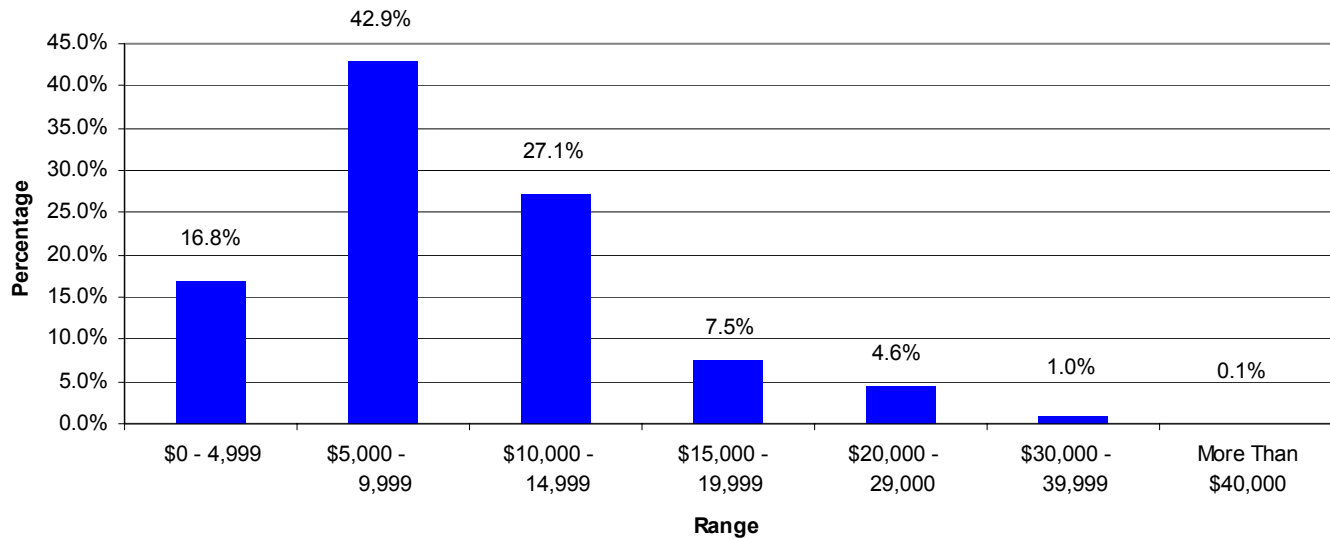
Similarly, the availability of telephones has a direct bearing on quality of life since many farmworkers have spouses or partners "back home" in either Central or South America. Telephones are the only way many farmworkers have to contact their friends and family in other countries.

Other neighborhood improvement suggestions were additional street lighting, improved water quality, improved drainage, improved streets, speed bumps, public transportation and an overall safer and cleaner environment.

Income and Employment

At the time of the survey, 61.9% of farmworkers were employed full-time, 27.1% reported part-time employment, and 9.8% reported being unemployed (compared to county-wide unemployment rate of 3.7%). As expected, incomes were very low. The majority of farmworkers had incomes of less than \$10,000 per year, which supported an average of three people. The Manatee County median income for 2002 was \$38,673.

Annual Income Ranges



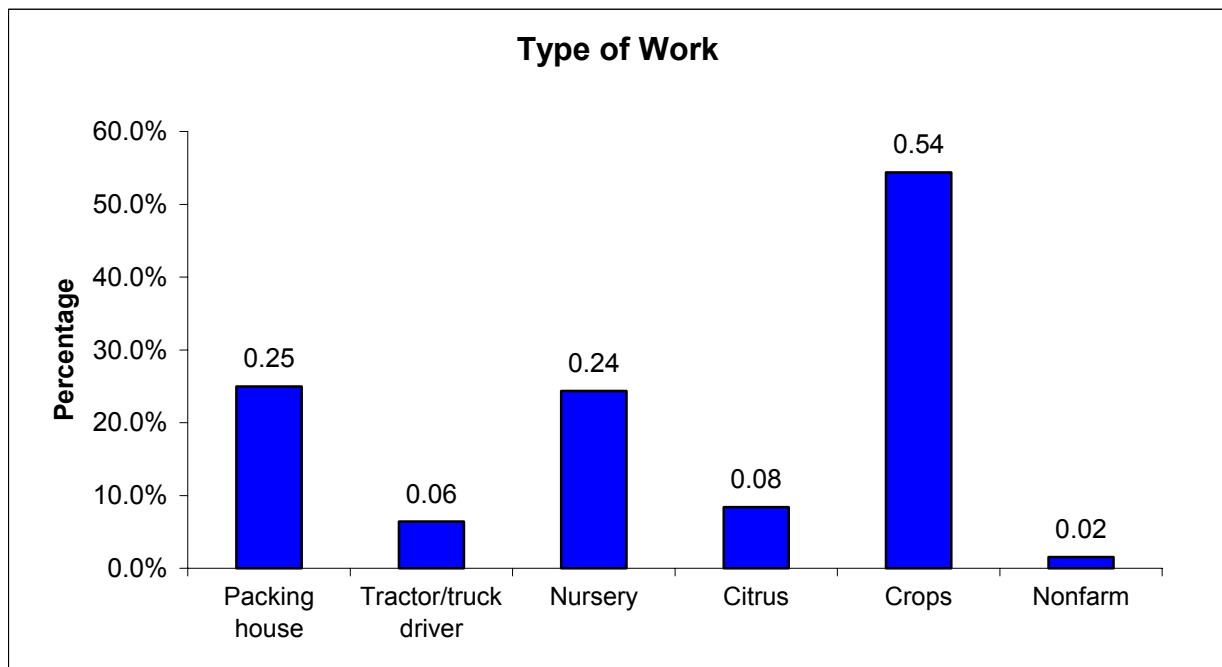
Salary range (in '000s)	Crops		Pack house		Truck/tractor driver		Nursery		Citrus	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-5	61	23.55%	15	12.82%	1	3.13%	11	9.65%	5	12.20%
5-10	117	45.17%	51	43.59%	6	18.75%	45	39.47%	16	39.02%
10-15	57	22.01%	36	30.77%	14	43.75%	41	35.96%	18	43.90%
15-20	15	5.79%	9	7.69%	6	18.75%	8	7.02%	2	4.88%
20-30	6	2.32%	5	4.27%	4	12.50%	9	7.89%		
30-40	3	1.16%	1	0.85%	1	3.13%				
Total	259	100.00%	117	100.00%	32	100.00%	114	100.00%	41	100.00%

Employment by Agricultural Sector

Farmworkers were principally employed across five sectors of agriculture:

- 54% in Field work, primarily tomatoes, pickles and peppers
- 25% in Packing Houses
- 24% in Nurseries
- 8% in Citrus
- 6% as Truck/Tractor Drivers

Seventy-two percent of farmworkers have only done one type of farmwork in the last year. Fourteen percent have worked in at least two different sectors, 5% have worked in three sectors, and only 1% has worked in four sectors.



This sample size for this graph is 512; the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Unaccompanied Workers' Work

As expected, a sizable majority (65%) of farmworker respondents were either single/unmarried (235) workers or married (108) with their spouses living in another country or area. These unaccompanied workers tended to be almost exclusively male (327 out of 343) and live in over-crowded housing conditions (average household size of 4.9). Thirty six percent of the non-resident spouses lived in Mexico. The remainder lived in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico and US locations outside of Manatee County.

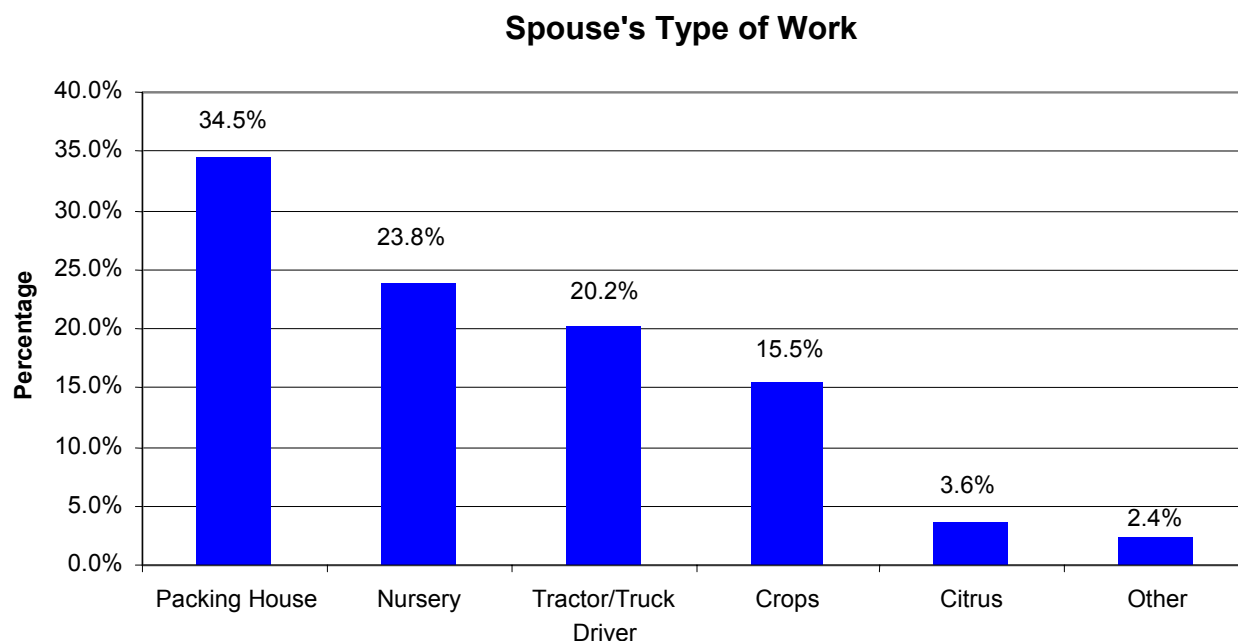
Unaccompanied workers tended to be disproportionately represented in an agricultural sector.

- 41% of Packing House workers were unaccompanied workers
- 40% of Nursery workers were unaccompanied workers
- 51% of Field workers were unaccompanied workers
- 81% of citrus workers were unaccompanied (not surprising, though the sample size was very small)
- 27% of Truck/Tractor drivers were unaccompanied workers

A very small percentage (2.1%) were divorced.

Spouses' Work

In those households where spouses are present, two thirds of the spouses are employed – most in farmwork. A relatively small percentage (14%, n=23) stayed at home and 8% (n=13) were unemployed. The number of spouses doing farmwork was 67.



Employment Benefits

The vast majority (79.2%) of respondents receive no employee benefits at either their current or last job. Of those receiving benefits, holiday pay was the most common (16.4%), followed by health insurance (10.1%) and sick leave (8.5%). Less than 1% had a pension plan, paid maternity leave or access to a credit union. (The percentages are based on a total of 365 valid responses to the questions about work-related benefits.)

Employment Obstacles

Transportation, literacy levels, and lack of documentation were reported as the most limiting factors in the ability of farmworkers to maintain employment or move on to better paying jobs. Only one third (34.8%, n=180) of farmworkers owned their own transportation and were therefore dependant on co-workers (29.4%, n=152) or employers (28.4%, n=147) for transportation to and from work. In addition, although 74% (n=339) reported not having any trouble finding work within the previous 12-month period, one third did need help completing a job application because of limited English proficiency. On average, farmworkers were willing to work hard at remaining employed. Respondents reported holding an average of 1.8 jobs over the previous 12 months (n=446).

As for documentation, because of the sensitive nature of the subject, and the project's desire to capture a considerable amount of personal information, the survey instrument purposefully contained no questions about legal status. Any comments about documentation (such as it being an employment obstacle) were entirely self-reported.

Banking

Only 6% of farmworkers reported having a bank account or utilizing traditional banking services. Most were either paid in cash or cashed their checks at neighborhood stores or through their employer. A lack of appropriate documentation was cited as the most common reason for not using a bank. There are banks and credit unions in Florida that have made inroads into the farmworker community by accepting the matricula consular as a primary form of identification. At least one local Manatee County Police Department (City of Palmetto) reports farmworkers are disproportionately the victims of armed robbery because they are known for carrying all their cash.

Similarly only tiny percentages of farmworkers had accessed traditional forms of credit:

- 4.2% had a credit card
- 2.4% had a bank loan for a house, car or truck

Very few households with children under the age of 18 reported children working, but of the 6% that did 87% of the children's income contributed to the household.

Health Care

The vast majority of farmworkers, 91.4%, reported having to pay for health care services in cash, mostly because of a lack of health insurance (n=423). Although the health care providers of Manatee County have done an excellent job of making their services known to the farmworker community, there are few services available at no charge for very low-income patients. Eighty-six percent of farmworkers knew where to go for health care, and 90% of those who sought care used either the local hospital or a clinic.

The survey asked respondents to self-identify health care concerns from a list of 22 items. The leading concerns reported were:

- 9.5% Cost
- 9.5% Dental
- 8.2% Asthma
- 7.9% Hearing/vision
- 7.2% Diabetes
- 5.6% High blood pressure

Not surprisingly, the majority of farmworkers **do not** receive services for any identified health problem, even though, aside from cost, the concerns are highly treatable.

Drugs and alcohol were asked about separately. Loneliness and boredom were known to be issues in the farmworker community – easily understood when two thirds of workers reside in the county without family. Drugs and alcohol were reported as being a problems within the farmworker community by 46% of respondents, and 69% of respondents would not know where to go for help with a drug or alcohol problem.

When comparing access to health services between the accompanied workers and the unaccompanied workers the results were unanticipated. The hypothesis had been that accompanied workers would have less problems getting health care, but in fact there was no statistical difference between the two groups.

Conclusion

It will be unfortunate if potential service providers or farmworker advocates skim through this report, reading only selected sections of primary interest, and not reading it in its entirety. An extraordinary amount of data was collected as a result of the survey that speaks directly to need, but because the survey instrument was so expansive (covering 19 subsections and containing almost 130 questions) it also collected a great deal of information that can be used to help ensure successful program planning – a tremendous unintended benefit. For example, in reference to the first subsection, “Adults and Education and Language”, 56% of farmworkers responded they would like to learn English. It would be a seemingly simple solution for those agencies currently conducting English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to expand their class offerings (funds permitting) and increase their outreach into the farmworker community. However, such planning would almost certainly fail. Only one third of farmworkers own their own transportation, and when they are working, they work long hours up to seven days a week. They cannot *go to* classes, the classes must *come to* them, and they must be available on nights and weekends. In addition, there is a misconception within the community that the classes have a cost. Outreach would have to address that fact as well.

These same principles apply to all sections of this report. The report should be taken as a whole and when program planning is being undertaken, the mitigating circumstances existing in the farmworkers lives need to be considered. The primary circumstances documented include:

- Limited English proficiency
- Limited education levels attained
- Long work days
- Job movement to remain employed
- Frequent moves to remain housed
- Lack of ownership of transportation
- Lack of health insurance
- Lack of the required documentation to access some services

There is no question that the needs of the farmworker community are tremendous, as each section of this report details. There is also no question that agriculture is a stable, strong contributor to the Manatee County economy and that the issues facing farmworkers are community issues – some of which mirror the needs of the community at large. For example, Whole Child Manatee reports that the very low figure of 3.6% of farmworker children being enrolled in daycare is similar to the low-income family childcare matriculation rate across the county. The same can also be said of the need for:

- Affordable housing, especially for very low income residents for whom homeownership will never be an option
- Inexpensive public transportation
- Parks and recreation
- Access to health screenings and appropriate medical care

There are instances however, where the needs of farmworkers require special attention. For example, consider the need for laundromats, pay phones, parks, and banking. The lack of laundromats is a health issue because of the pesticide exposure encountered by farmworkers. Laundry facilities need to be located near residences where they are easily accessible to farmworkers. Ideally, employers could

supply uniforms that do not leave the job site. Pay phones are the only way many farmworkers have to keep in touch with family, since two-thirds of them are in this country alone, and many do not have telephones in their homes. Pay phones need to be near residences. Parks are needed to help allay boredom and loneliness. Two-thirds of the farmworkers are here without their families, and providing positive ways to spend their “off time” will improve their quality of life, and probably decrease some of the instances of drug and alcohol use observed. The need for banking services is a community issue. A local mayor reports farmworkers are disproportionately the victims of armed robbery. There are banks that will accept the matricula consular identification to open an account, which will also offer the farmworkers a less expensive method of sending money home.

Most farmworkers live quietly in near isolation. Some of this is self-imposed but most is not. They are isolated by language, education, and housing (when the employer provides housing), but also by their legal status. The survey did not ask about the documentation of respondents because of the sensitive nature of the information being collected. However, there was considerable self-reporting of the lack of documentation being an obstacle for farmworkers. Farmworkers thought documentation would help them find better employment and make it easier to access health care, for example.

Finally, the survey findings offer concrete ways for many Manatee County agencies and businesses to incorporate the needs of farmworkers into program planning. There are opportunities to go beyond traditional service provision—there are opportunities to forge new partnerships. A few are listed here as examples:

- Creation of small business opportunities, possibly by and for farmworkers (laundromats, for example)
- Creation of banking opportunities (for example, having community forums planned by trusted agencies that include the Mexican consulate and willing banks)
- Bringing the county and community residents together in planning public parks in communities where farmworkers reside
- Creating night and weekend daycare options on-site or near packing houses by bringing together employers, the county and nonprofit daycare providers (such as the Redland Christian Migrant Association)
- Creating a series of appropriate LEP (Limited English Proficiency) and cultural competency trainings for Manatee County agencies and businesses

These are just a few possibilities suggested by the survey findings. There are many more opportunities for improving the lives of farmworkers and benefiting the community as a whole. This report is the first step in what will, hopefully, be a process of community involvement in improving the lives of farmworkers and reaching out to some of the more isolated residents of this county.

Contact Information

The Latino Community Network of Manatee County meets the 3rd Thursday of every month from 12:30 – 2:00 PM at the Mary Strong Full Service Center in Palmetto (behind Tillman Elementary off of SR 301). To verify the date and time of the next meeting, please call 941-723-4702.

For questions about this project or report contact:

Chris Roberts
US-HUD
305-536-5678 ext. 2214

Additional queries using the data may be run on request, providing the information requested is within the scope of the survey. Make requests to Chris Roberts at the number referenced above.